

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ALLAN MCCOLLUM

THE EVENT: Petrified Lightning from Central Florida

(With Supplemental Didactics)

October 20-November 24, 2000

Friedrich Petzel Gallery is pleased to announce an exhibition of Allan McCollum entitled *THE EVENT: Petrified Lightning from Central Florida*. There will be an opening reception on October 20 from 6-8pm. For this large-scale project McCollum explored the ways in which treasured objects are created in nature and in culture, and how their meanings are constructed within the community that gives them value. *THE EVENT: Petrified Lightning from Central Florida*, was developed in Tampa for the University of South Florida Contemporary Art Museum and the Museum of Science and Industry.

McCollum spent the summer of 1997 triggering lightning strikes by launching small rockets with hair-thin copper wires trailing behind them directly into storm clouds as they passed overhead. The triggered lightning bolts were directed down the wires into various containers prepared by the artist that were filled with Central Florida minerals donated by a local sand mining operation. The bolts instantly liquefied a column of sand with temperatures up to 50,000 degrees Fahrenheit. This immediately recondensed into a column of naturally created glass that exactly duplicated the path of the lightning bolt. These were then dug out by the artist in a manner similar to the way a paleontologist might remove a fragile fossil from its matrix. The result is the fulgurite, or what is sometimes referred to as petrified lightning.

Using a mixture of epoxy and zircon, 10,000 fulgurites were cast from a single mold. Through this process, McCollum specifically explored the creation of objects by lightning. In this way he also deconstructed commonly held ideas of instant production of objects, and popular metaphors that are often used to describe the processes of creativity, as with our fantasies of receiving "illumination" from above, being "struck" with an idea like a "bolt from the blue."

As another element of the installation, he produced a series of 10,000 small booklets on fifty subjects related to fulgurites and lightning. This arrangement provided the equal balance between the visual and scientific content that was integral to the exhibition.

This is Allan McCollum's second solo exhibition with Friedrich Petzel Gallery. Other recent projects and exhibitions include *Museum as Muse* at the Museum of Modern Art, *L'Envers du Décor in Lille*, France, and *InSite San Diego*.

For more information please contact Blaire Dessent at 212-680-9467.